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S E C R E T DJIBOUTI 001127

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2010

TAGS: PREL DJ OREP

SUBJECT: VISIT TO DJIBOUTI OF CODEL MILLER

Classified By: CDA: REGribbin for reasons 1.5 b&d

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Representatives Jeff Miller, John Boozman, Tom Cole and Madeleine Bordallo spent six productive hours in Djibouti on August 23. They left with a solid appreciation of the situation in the country and region and of U.S. undertakings here. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The country team discussed U.S./Djibouti relations with the codel stressing that the current excellent state of ties is based on coinciding interests: that of the U.S. in combating terrorism in the region and of Djibouti's willingness - for a price - to be the platform for such a presence. The representatives were pleased with the growing depth of cooperation on the military front, but also with the USG focus on economic and social issues, especially education and health via USAID projects.

¶3. (SBU) The visitors toured Camp Lemonier, lunched with constituents, and were briefed on CJTF-HOA's mission and objectives in the region. The heat - about 120 degrees - underscored the difficulty of living and working conditions in the Horn of Africa. Certainly a highlight for Representative Bordallo was the discovery of a whole company of soldiers from Guam. General Helland and his staff discussed various community development projects relating to schools, wells and livestock in Yemen, Ethiopia and Kenya as well as Djibouti in order to make the point that such face-to-face encounters, done in the company of host country counterparts, achieved the objective of presenting the U.S. in a positive light. The delegation visited the primary school at Doudah (near the base, but unfortunately located near the city dump) that was renovated as part of Camp Lemonier's Community outreach program.

¶4. (S) The representatives were also briefed on the nature of the terrorist threat in the region, U.S. efforts to identify it and cooperation with Djiboutian and other national authorities in countering it. One of the visitors asked, at least partially rhetorically, if such a US presence as exemplified by the Camp generated or mitigated the threat? In another comment, prior to the military briefing, another representative expressed curiosity as to why the U.S. troops were so separated from the local population. In light of ongoing talk in Washington about intelligence re-organization, Congressman Miller asked how CJTF-HOA intel concerns might best be served. General Helland stated that as a field commander he wanted to be able to task folks accountable to him for intelligence products. He observed that the existing system served that purpose well.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The representatives were mostly in a listening mode, but were clearly interested in learning more about this far corner of the world and U.S. interests and activities here.

¶5. (U) This message was drafted after the codel's departure and was not cleared by them.

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